

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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R 071026Z JUL 77
FM AMEMBASSY DACCA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5320
INFO AMCONSUL CALCUTTA
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
CINCPAC HONOLULU

C O N F I D E N T I A L DACCA 3650

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, BG
SUBJECT: CABINET CHANGES STYMIED BY MILITARY?

1. SEVERAL SOURCES HAVE TOLD EMBOFFS THAT ZIA WAS PREPARED TO ANNOUNCE A NUMBER OF CHANGES IN HIS COUNCIL OF ADVISORS (SURROGATE CABINET) DURING THE WEEKEND OF JULY 2-3, BUT WAS STYMIED BY ADVERSE REACTIONS FROM SEVERAL MILITARY COLLEAGUES. ACCORDING TO THE REPORTS, WHICH WE BELIEVE TO BE SUBSTANTIALLY CORRECT, PLANS HAD ADVANCED TO THE POINT OF PRINTING INVITATION CARDS FOR DIPLOMATS AND LOCAL DIGNITARIES TO WITNESS THE SWEARING IN CEREMONY.

2. ZIA'S PLAN WAS TO RETAIN ADMIRAL KHAN AND AIR VICE MARSHAL MAHMOOD IN THE CABINET AND TO ADD (AMONG OTHERS) GENERALS DASTGIR (DIRECTOR, BANGLADESH RIFLES) AND ERSHAD (DEPUTY CHIEF OF THE ARMY STAFF), BUT REQUIRE ALL FOUR TO RESIGN THEIR MILITARY COMMISSIONS AND ENTER THE CABINET
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AS CIVILIANS. AT A MEETING AT THE CONTONMENT ON JULY 2, DASTGIR SAID THAT, SPEAKING FOR ALL FOUR, THEY WOULD BE WILLING TO RESIGN THEIR COMMISSIONS AND ENTER THE CABINET ONLY IF ZIA RESIGNED AS ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF. ZIA REFUSED TO AGREE AND THE PLAN FOR CABINET CHANGES WAS ABORTED OR AT LEAST DELAYED.

3. OTHER CHANGES WHICH WERE ANTICIPATED INCLUDED THE DROPPING FROM THE CABINET OF HAFIZUDDIN (INDUSTRIES), ANWARUL HUQUE (JUTE), AND M.M. HAQUE (HEALTH), AND THE ADDITION OF SHAFIUL AZAM (DEPUTY CHAIRMAN, PLANNING COMMISSION), SALAHUDDIN AHMED (HOME SECRETARY) AND ABDUL MOMEN KHAN (CABINET SECRETARY). NO POLITICAL FIGURES WERE TO BE INCLUDED, WE ARE TOLD.

4. COMMENT: ZIA HAS BEEN FACING SOME ANIMOSITY FROM HIS SENIOR MILITARY COLLEAGUES, ESPECIALLY SINCE HIS ASSUMPTION FIRST OF CHIEF MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATOR TITLE AND THEN OF PRESIDENCY, WHILE RETAINING HIS POST AS CHIEF OF THE ARMY STAFF. HE CLEARLY WISHES TO RETAIN THAT POSITION TO KEEP HIS DIRECT LINK WITH THE TROOPS WHO ARE HIS ULTIMATE SOURCE OF POWER. AT THE SAME TIME HE WISHES TO DIVORCE DASTGIR (WHO IS OFTEN REPORTED TO BE AMBITIOUS) FROM HIS POTENTIAL STRENGTH IN THE BDR. THE ABILITY OF ERSHAD, KKAN AND MAHMOOD TO USE TROOPS UNDER THEIR COMMAND IS LESS CRITICAL BUT NONETHELESS SOMETHING TO BE CONSIDERED. DESPITE HIS OVERWHELMING VICTORY IN THE REFERENDUM AND THIS EVIDENT SUPPORT AMONG THE CIVILIAN POPULATION, ZIA COULD STILL BE CHALLENGED BY HIS COLLEAGUES IN THE MILITARY. THIS REPORTED EFFORT TO COUNTERACT THEM HAS FAILED BUT AN ATTEMPT TO FIND ANOTHER FORMULAR WILL NO DOUBT BE MADE.

BERGESEN

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